

## General Topics :: REGULATIVE VS. NORMATIVE WORSHIP PRINCIPLES

### REGULATIVE VS. NORMATIVE WORSHIP PRINCIPLES - posted by Solomon101, on: 2013/3/7 10:06

Not long ago, in a public setting, someone asked me what I thought about the regulative principle of worship. Because there are those who claim to be rigidly loyal to this principle, and since the majority of Christians have never even heard of this principle, I thought it might be helpful to define the term and analyze the pros and cons of adherence.

In large measure, the regulative principle of worship came about centuries ago as a reaction to the perceived idolatry of Roman Catholicism. In essence, this principle states that only those elements that are commanded or depicted in the Bible are acceptable in worship. Some refer to this as an exclusive view or practice of worship because it excludes anything that is not directly instructed or at least shown in the pages of Scripture.

The regulative principle of worship is often contrasted with the normative principle of worship, which teaches that whatever is not prohibited in Scripture is permitted in worship. Many people refer to this as an inclusive view of worship because it has the potential of including those things that are not directly banned by the Bible. The normative principle is by far the more widespread position in the Protestant Church.

My experience has been that those who appear to dogmatically adhere to the regulative principle really don't. They regularly add that which is not mentioned in Scripture to their worship, and leave out other elements that are mentioned. Let me offer just a few obvious examples.

Conservative reformed churches, one of the strongest groups to pledge their allegiance to the regulative principle, nearly always use pipe organs in their services. There are no pipe organs mentioned in the Bible. By their own standards, they've added something to God's Word. Unacceptable.

At the same time these same churches rarely (most never) clap their hands in their services (Psalm 47:1), shout for joy to God (Psalm 66:1), lift their hands (Psalm 134:2), praise God in the dance (Psalm 149:3) or use trumpets, tambourines or cymbals (Psalm 150:3-5). If they insist that the Word is the standard for what is acceptable, why neglect such obvious instructions?

These examples may seem like nit-picking, but they are not. If you say that only the elements mentioned in Scripture are acceptable, then any deviation, no matter how minor, is wrong. Interestingly, there is no mention of pews in the Bible. No elevated pulpits. No hymnals. No pianos. No air conditioning. No microphones. Should I continue?

The normative principle of worship has far more merit from an honest scriptural perspective. Even those who insist on the regulative principle of worship apply the normative principle to the rest of life.

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

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### Re: REGULATIVE VS. NORMATIVE WORSHIP PRINCIPLES - posted by rufnrust (), on: 2013/3/7 11:35

Great post. Some of the children I work with do cart-wheels while others are running or dancing etc....

ruf

### Re: - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2013/3/7 14:26

Quote: Some of the children I work with do cart-wheels while others are running or dancing

What if it was adults cart-wheeling, running and dancing what would you think?

**Re: - posted by rufnrust (), on: 2013/3/7 19:21**

Great question Colin.

Certainly it would be unusual in our 'normal' settings to witness such things. I have often thought of the lame man at the 'beautiful gate' who went walking and leaping and praising the Lord into the temple. It must have startled those gathered, but who could say he was praising the Lord too much. It was cause for great joy and celebration.

The unspeakable joy of salvation and deliverance from slavery, to Jesus Christ and His unsearchable kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost is cause for great rejoicing. Dancing, shouting, and twirling are just a few appropriate responses we are privileged to engage in.

I must admit I personally haven't done a cart-wheel for a while. lol But I am in on the rest.

The children have brought great encouragement to the adults in our fellowship. Many who were once afraid to just raise their hands to the Lord are now free from the fear of man that hindered them.

I should add that when it is time for what we would call more solemn worship, the children are first to bow and lay on their faces before the Lord, worshiping and praying for each other. Frankly, they wonder sometimes why the adults just sit, seemingly unmoved. That is not me talking there.

We are attempting to teach the truth about praise and give them the space and freedom to actually do it. The results have been amazing.

Russell

**Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2013/3/8 7:12**

I remember well the mighty (and might I add stupid) struggle I had resisting the Holy Spirit's insistence that I raise my hands during worship. It went on for a couple of years. When I finally obeyed, quite a weight was lifted.

Various expressions of worship don't bother me any more, with a few exceptions. Sometimes I get so fired up during worship that I feel like running laps around the church, but haven't done that yet!